THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI Z. R. ANSARI): (a) and (b) According to the studies of satellite imagery by the National Remote Sensing Agency, the average annual rate of depletion of forest cover during the period 1972—75 to 1980—82 was approximately 1.3 million hectares. The rate of deforestation on account of diversion of forest land for non-forest purposes has come down since the enactment of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980. No studies have been carried out during the last three years to assess the increase in degradation of forest lands.

(c) Increasing biotic pressure on forest resources and diversion of forest land to non-forest uses are major impediments in containing deforestation. The following measures have been taken by the Government to check deforestation:—

1. Guidelines have been issued to the State Governments

(i) to avoid clearfelling of natural forests and where such fellings are inevitable for restoration of crop or other silvicultural considerations, it should be restricted to areas not exceeding 10 hectares in the hills and 25 hectares in the plains.

(ii) to consider banning of felling in the hills above 1000 metres, at least for some years.

(iii) to identify critical areas in the hills and mountains which require protection from felling of forests and need immediate vigorous afforestations.

(iv) to set apart 4 per cent of the geographical area as protection areas like wildlife sanctuaries, national parks, biosphere reserves etc.

2. Development of infrastructure and enforcement of legal provisions for the protection of forest.

3. Enactment of Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 to check diversion of forest land to non-forest purposes.

4. Development of alternative sources of energy to replace fuelwood in domestic and commercial sectors.

5. Substitution of wood by alternative materials in packaging, railway sleepers and building construction.

6. Liberalised import policy for forest products.

Ex-gratia payment to victims of Novembers, 84 riots

1112. SHRI VIRENDRA VERMA: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to refer to the answer to Unstarred Question 45 given in the Rajya Sabha on the 24th February, 1987 and state:

(a) whether the modalities to pay ex-gratia amount to the November, 1984 riot victims have been worked out;

(b) if so, what are the details thereof stating the period likely to be taken in making the actual payments to the riot victims; and

(c) if the answer to part (a) above be in the negative, what are the reasons for the delay in working out the modalities for payment of ex-gratia amount to the riot victims?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI CHINTAMANI PANIGRAHI): (a) to (c) The modalities regarding payment of ex-gratia amount for the loss|damage of the uninsured property to the November, 1984 riot victims have not yet been finalised. It took some time to get the views of the concerned State Government| Delhi Administration. These are, however, likely to be finalised very soon.

Indulgence of Pakistani Nationals in communal violence

1113. SHRI VIRENDRA VERMA:
SHRI SHARAD YADAV:
SHRI RAM NARESH KUSHAWAHA:

Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that during the recent communal riots in Meerut,